

The Gurnet - Part VII

By HERBERT BOARDMAN
[Written in 1935]

The excursion boat from Boston to Plymouth that season was a neat little steamer entitled the "Plymouth."

One of the first to have a gasoline launch was John Batchelder. Fayette Boardman had a fine launch with which he expected to take out parties, but he left it out one night on the ocean side, and a storm came up and drove it on the rocks.

I must not forget the other Gurnet people of this period. The present Courtney house was the cottage of C.L. Willoughby of Chicago, who also owned the famous Winslow House on North St., Plymouth.

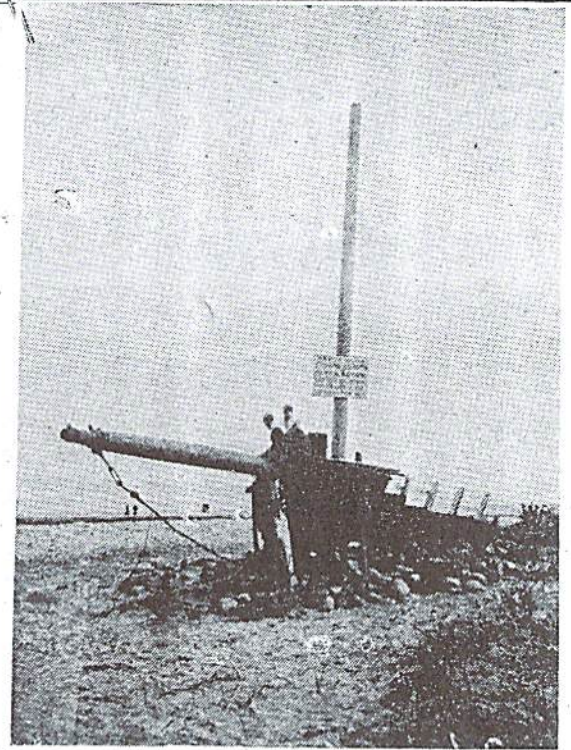
After the death of his first wife, a Gurnet lover, and his second marriage, he seldom came over to town. His cottage, then the best house on the point, stood idle for several seasons. Later the Thomas family of Plymouth bought and occupied it. The Misses Thomas -- particularly Susan, were very gay people and confirmed Gurnet addicts. There were dancing parties in the coast guard station, bonfires on the beach, out door games in the fort and so on.

Next to the Willoughby house was the Harlow cottage and next to that the Murphy cottage. The lighthouse keeper's house, the house of the Coast Guard captain, and the little cottage of the retired Capt. Holmes with the adjoining barn made over into a lodge were all situated on the hill. The Gray cottage, the Barnes cottage, and the Batchelder and Watson houses on the shore by the gap completed the number of houses.

Of the children I grew up with and played with at the Gurnet, I remember particularly Adele and Albert Howe, Leslie and Richard Barnes, the Rogers boys and Kendall Holmes, son of Alfred Holmes of Plymouth, and grandson of Mr. Harlow.

With these cottagers and the boarders at the Gurnet House, there were plenty of people on the Gurnet each summer. But all had to make their own amusement. There were no stores, restaurants, bowling alleys, outdoor theatres, merry-go-rounds or roller coasters. It was impossible to spend a cent without going to town. Only recently an attempt was made to keep a small store but it was unsuccessful. An occasional dance in the pavilion was the height of the frivolity.

On Labor Day, 1900 nearly every boarder decided to return to Boston. How to transport them to the train was a problem. A few of the cottagers went by boat to Plymouth. We all wanted to make the last train leaving Duxbury at 5:30 pm. The beach wagon and 2 or 3 other carriages carried some up the beach and to the station. Our party was to go by sailboat to Powder Point Bridge and we telephoned Henry Briggs of the Duxbury livery stable to have a



The wreck of the fishing schooner Mary A. Brown. It was wrecked Dec. 19, 1908 with the loss of the captain and 5 men.

conveyance meet us there.

I remember that Miss Ada Jensen, on her first visit to the Gurnet, was unfortunate enough to be hit on the head by the boom of the sailboat. While not seriously hurt she was very uncomfortable on the tiresome trip home. Upon reaching the bridge, we found an old horse drawn barge, seating about 25 persons, awaiting us. We all piled into the barge, named "Lady Washington" and jogged slowly but surely stationward.

The train picked up a gay crowd at Green Harbor, a gayer one from Brant Rock, at Marshfield more lively people at Sea View from Humarock and many at Scituate and North Scituate. Additional cars were taken on at every station; interminable delays resulted. It was well along into the evening and the long train of kerosene lighted wooden coaches

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crawled towards Boston -- hours late.

It was a terribly tedious ride. Frank Hilton and I tried to keep amused but soon got tired and cranky. As I loathed the idea of leaving the Gurnet in the first place and the idea of school on the morrow I was in tears most of the time. I remember the train standing on the curve at Braintree with the lighted cars extending out of sight forward and back. By the time the train puffed into the new South Station there must have been at least 15 cars, jammed to the doors with people and baggage. Such was the return of the vacationists on Labor Day, 35 years ago.

1901. The first summer of the 20th Century! Mr. and Mrs. W.H. Wentworth and family of Cambridge arrived for the season on June 12. Reginald was quite grown up and Dorothea was a little girl. They paid substantially for everything and were regarded as important personages. Mrs. Wentworth was a woman with a commanding personality, very intellectual and she usurped the position of leader in the social life of Gurnet House. She dominated all activities and all conversation centered about her big swinging canvas easy chair which she had brought with her. We used to gather in the pavilion on cold nights round the fireplace and if any of us children as much as looked at the canvas chair our folks would remind us that we must not sit in it. That was Mrs. Wentworth's chair. There was never the slightest chance we would because the owner was always in it. How I envied this lady and wished I could sit in this chair just once.

When I came down in August I am afraid I was a little irritated by it all. As a boy of 9, I failed to appreciate the fact that they were people of splendid background. Was this my grandfather's place where I had always been happy, with these overbearing creatures running things? This amused me now as I think of it and realize how fortunate my grandparents were to have such aristocratic guests.

When a pair of gunners engaged board and were accompanied by women not their wives, it was Mrs. Wentworth who detected the fact that they were transgressing the laws of morality. She delivered the ultimatum that she would leave if they were allowed to stay. My grandmother, of course promptly rebuked them and ordered them to leave. The only defense offered was, "It's the way of the world. Mrs. Boardman!"
